United Nations A/54/PV.33

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

33rd plenary meeting
Monday, 11 October 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab . . . . . (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: reports of the General Committee

Second report of the General Committee (A/54/250/Add.1)

The President: The second report of the General Committee, document A/54/250/Add.1, concerns a request by a number of delegations for the inclusion in the agenda of an additional item, "Observer status for the community of Portuguese-Speaking countries in the General Assembly"; a request by the delegation of South Africa for the inclusion of an additional sub-item under agenda item 151, "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations"; and a request by the Chairman of the Second Committee concerning sub-item (a) of agenda item 101, "Operational activities for development."

In paragraph 1 of the report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that an additional item entitled "Observer status for the community of Portuguese-Speaking countries in the General Assembly" should be included in the agenda of the current session.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include in the agenda of the current session this additional item?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee further decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the additional item should be considered directly in plenary meeting.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 2 of the report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that an additional sub-item entitled "Reallocation of South Africa to the group of Member States" set out in paragraph 3 (c) of General Assembly resolution 43/232" should be included as a sub-item of agenda item 151, "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations".

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional item as a sub-item of agenda item 151 in the agenda of the current session?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee further decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the additional sub-item should be allocated to the Fifth Committee.

99-86095 (E)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate the sub-item to the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: The Chairman of the Fifth Committee will be informed of the decision just taken.

In paragraph 3 of the report, the General Committee, having recalled that the General Assembly had allocated agenda item 101 and its sub-items to the Second Committee, decided to recommend to the General Assembly that sub-item (a), entitled "Operational activities for development of the United Nations system", of agenda item 101, "Operational activities for development", also be considered directly in plenary meeting on the understanding that only the topic entitled "Follow-up of the World Summit for Children" would be considered in the plenary.

May I take it that the General Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

Date of the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

The President: In connection with agenda item 165, members will recall that the General Assembly, at its 3rd plenary meeting, on 17 September 1999, decided to hold the Commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Monday, 15 November 1999, in the morning. Members will further recall that this date was suggested by the Member States that sponsored the inclusion of agenda item 165. After consultations with those Member States, I should like to propose that the Commemoration be held on Thursday, 11 November 1999, in the morning, instead of Monday, 15 November.

I see no objection.

It was so decided.

Agenda item 10 (*continued*)

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/54/1)

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): As I was getting up from my seat to come up here to speak, I was looking at you, Mr. President, and an image came back to me of the first time we met, some 24 years ago. It was in Dakar, at the International Conference on Namibia and Human Rights. At that time you were the representative of the South West Africa People's Organization. Now, as I see you there in the Chair, I cannot help telling you how extraordinarily happy I am to see you presiding over our work.

I would also like to confirm to the Secretary-General our great appreciation for his action and his commitment wherever our Organization is called upon. We commend him warmly for his excellent report, which is now before us. It describes the decisive and unavoidable role that the United Nations must always play in strengthening the international community and in increasingly mobilizing it to take up the major challenges confronting humanity at the end of this century.

Beginning a new century — even more, beginning a new millennium — gives rise to fears and doubts among human beings. In general fears of the unknown and uncertainty about what will happen in the future are heightened by the change and upheaval characteristic of transitional periods. However, the times in which we are living are particularly suited to creating such anxieties.

There is certainly no lack of grounds for concern at the political, economic and social levels. The Secretary-General in his report thoroughly reviews these challenges, while also describing the efforts the United Nations and the international community have made to cope with them. Above all he proposes new directions for more vigorous and resolute action.

The first and foremost source of concern is, without doubt, the increase in armed conflicts which has recently been observed. From the Horn of Africa to the Middle East, from West Africa to Central Africa, from Afghanistan to Chechnya, from East Timor to Kosovo, the number of confrontations is proliferating — and with them come suffering, victims and destruction.

The very nature of armed conflict has also changed. More than 90 per cent of the conflicts do not pit State against State, but are rather intra-State conflicts, involving local armed groups, factions, militias and even ethnic groups. Moreover, the conflicts are lasting longer and have become more deadly. What is even more disturbing is the increasing targeting of civilians, who now make up most of the victims. The figures are not only telling; they make one shudder. The proportion of

the victims of armed conflicts who are civilians has changed from 5 per cent during the First World War to 90 per cent today. Certainly the international community must respond in a determined manner to the increase in killing and to the disturbing trend of flouting the most fundamental rights of human beings. In this connection, the recent establishment of the International Criminal Court, which is an important step forward in the struggle to combat impunity at the global level, is truly promising.

Preventive diplomacy, as the Secretary-General recognizes, is an essential aspect of the struggle to control the proliferation of armed conflicts. It deserves special attention, and the necessary implementation mechanisms are well known. They are mediation, negotiation, early warning and preventive deployment and disarmament.

Here let us pay tribute to the mediation efforts of the Secretary-General and his special envoys to defuse tensions in several hot spots. We should also commend the achievements of various facilitators and mediators, whose effective and discreet work is often unknown to the general public.

Nonetheless, most conflicts and crises continue to catch the international community unawares. This demonstrates the need to further refine preventive mechanisms at the global as well as at subregional levels so that the first signs of conflicts can be recognized and conflicts can truly be nipped in the bud. More than ever before it is important that the international community react in a timely fashion, rather than waiting for situations to degenerate. To be truly effective, preventive diplomacy must integrate these two dimensions.

More than any other continent, Africa is being tragically torn apart by deadly conflicts. Be they inter-State or inter-ethnic, all these conflicts involve heavy losses of human life and devastating consequences for the economic and social development of the countries involved. In particular, the recurrent security problems of Central Africa are of serious concern to Cameroon.

In this connection we commend the excellent efforts made by the United Nations and local actors to achieve peace in the region. These efforts reflect the hopes of thousands of civilians, refugees and displaced persons who have been caught up in these confrontations while often not understanding why they are occurring.

Peace and security are the necessary and indispensable conditions for development and progress. Therefore we must at all costs put an end to the wars in Africa, and in Central Africa in particular. It is in this spirit that Cameroon is actively involved in implementing the objectives that the States of our subregion have set for themselves within the context of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. It has become clear that this Committee has provided the best framework for dialogue in Central Africa as the region seeks to establish its security.

The efforts have already led to the signing of a non-aggression pact and to the recent creation of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, known as COPAX. They have also led to the creation of an early-warning mechanism. Other structures are also going to be set up. These will be a subregional parliament, a subregional centre for human rights and democracy, and a Central African court of justice. All these structures bear witness to the concern of the leaders of the region to forever distance their peoples from the horrors of war.

This shared resolve of the leaders of Central Africa to build peace was also demonstrated by the organization in Yaoundé of a high-level seminar on the implementation in Central Africa of the recommendations made in the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. Along the same lines, a subregional conference on the proliferation and illicit trade in light weapons and small arms will take place in N'Djamena from 25 to 27 October. This conference will allow the countries of the subregion to consider ways and means of fighting this scourge, a harbinger of ongoing insecurity and instability that jeopardizes these countries' efforts towards development.

Cameroon urges the United Nations and the international community to increase their sorely needed assistance to the implementation and functioning of the mechanisms created by these means. These mechanisms are crucibles of the hope and legitimate aspirations of the peoples of a region beset by wars and recurring crises.

Like the Consultative Committee in Central Africa, regional organizations are playing an ever more important role in peacemaking by establishing mechanisms to prevent and manage conflicts and to maintain and restore peace. As necessary and useful as it may be, the work of regional organization to prevent or stop conflicts must nevertheless be carried out in full respect of international legality and in particular of the principles of the United Nations Charter. These principles must remain the focus

of efforts and initiatives in support of peace if our work is to avoid losing its direction and all its legitimacy.

Of course, the international community cannot possibly stand aside yet again to watch, impotent, indifferent or hesitant, as it regrettably did in Rwanda, as genocide or any other mass human rights violation unfolds. However, the United Nations Charter must in all cases guide the action to be taken. As the Secretary-General says in his report, only the Charter provides a universally accepted legal basis for the use of force. It is the Charter alone that allows the need to guarantee state sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs to be reconciled with the need collectively to build a better world of peace, justice and freedom for all. The Secretary-General's report and his opening statement to this session had the merit of initiating a debate that must be continued.

The responses of the international community to crises and their humanitarian repercussions cannot be predetermined. Indeed, crises are not all identical. Thus, States must determine appropriate rules of conduct and parameters reflecting the necessary balance between the specific features of each crisis and the need to act. The international community must also use greater subtlety in drafting or implementing certain decisions to settle crisis or conflict situations. Thus, we must always take care to avoid unnecessary suffering for civilian populations when we implement or impose embargoes.

The international community should be moved with the same resolve by the humanitarian disasters that follow increasingly upon armed conflicts, wherever they may take place. The relative indifference and reluctance of the international community to mobilize to address humanitarian catastrophes or conflicts occurring in Africa are difficult to understand, especially at a time when the global village is becoming ever more real and when the sense of solidarity that humanity will need successfully to take up the challenges of the third millennium should be asserting itself more than ever.

The ways such solidarity can be implemented are varied. It is no less true that the way in which it is expressed will largely determine the world's stability in the twenty-first century. The promotion of economic and social development — which, as everyone knows, is a guarantor of peace and security throughout the world — must be one of the central areas in which this solidarity is expressed. Indeed, it is the area par excellence in which international solidarity must be manifest. We can never say it too often: if it is to be effective and truly to bear fruit, this solidarity must involve the maintenance and increase in official development assistance, fair remuneration for the commodities on which our economies are based, and debt alleviation.

In this context, we must also give more balanced attention to our consideration of the special situation of medium-income countries, whose efforts should be encouraged that they may emerge and become more competitive. This will require, *inter alia*, that such countries benefit from a bare minimal ease of access to the resources of the international financial institutions, of course without prejudice to the support that must be lent to the least developed developing countries.

The United Nations is the foremost crucible and showcase of international cooperation and solidarity. As such, it embodies the fundamental and existential hopes of the peoples of the world to see the twenty-first century and the third millennium be consecrated to general peace and fairly apportioned prosperity. Let us therefore not stint in our support of the Organization.

Cameroon has consistently asserted its devotion to the goals and principles that underpin the United Nations and its support for the work of the Secretary-General. On behalf of Cameroon, I wish once again to reiterate *hic et nunc* that commitment and support.

Mr. Chaouachi (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Tunisia thanks the Secretary-General for his thorough report on the work of the Organization over the past year. My delegation, which has studied the report closely, also followed with interest the statement by Mr. Kofi Annan to the General Assembly on 20 September 1999, when he presented his annual report and a number of new proposals and concepts.

Tunisia fully shares the views of the Secretary-General on the need to replace a culture of reaction with a culture of prevention, as it is true that prevention is better than cure, and that prevention is ultimately less costly in human lives and precious resources. The instruments of preventive diplomacy, including early warning, post-conflict peace-building and preventive deployment, are among the means available to the international community to deal with conflict or pre-conflict situations that threaten peace and security and place civilian populations at risk.

It is also true that humanitarian challenges have now taken on particularly serious dimensions. These are major

challenges which undeniably must be met. We also endorse the assessment on this matter of the Secretary-General, whom we support in his appeal to the international community to set up better prevention strategies.

In our view, these strategies should be shaped by certain central concerns, including dealing with the root causes of outbreaks of violence in certain regions of the world, from which stems the need to promote and accelerate economic and social development. Poverty and underdevelopment threaten major segments of the population throughout the world. In his report the Secretary-General rightly notes that over the past decade official development assistance has been declining. The 0.7 per cent of gross national product of developed countries set by the international community as the official development assistance goal has not yet been achieved.

There is certainly a need to renew efforts in the framework of international economic cooperation to speed up the pace of development in the countries of the South and to meet the challenge of poverty, whose image becomes less and less tolerable given the enormous progress achieved at the end of the twentieth century.

With regard to the concept of what is known as humanitarian intervention, I would like to reiterate the comments made by the Foreign Minister of my country during the general debate. He emphasized that this is a delicate and sensitive issue which requires in-depth consideration, account being taken of two essential aspects: first, the sovereignty of States and the need to preserve it as a natural right enshrined in the United Nations Charter and as a basic element of international relations; secondly, the need to give assistance to civilian populations during armed conflicts by applying the principle of international solidarity.

The Tunisian Minister also invited Member States to carefully consider all the dimensions of this issue, in order to arrive at a consensus through a well considered, calm debate. Finally, Tunisia, through its Minister, stressed the importance of having this debate take place within both the Security Council and the General Assembly. Today we reiterate those observations. We are ready to participate in any mechanism established by the Assembly for this purpose. It is essential that the debate take place in a calm and clear atmosphere and that its outcome reflect a true consensus and not a relationship of force, real or perceived, which would in no way serve the noble objectives we are pursuing.

Before concluding this statement, which is necessarily short as compared to the diversity and the number of issues taken up by the Secretary-General in his report, I would like to refer to the question of sanctions to highlight the interest which should be accorded to the ongoing improvement and refinement of their use as a tool in the service of international peace and security. In this framework, particular importance should be placed on keeping the use of sanctions for a last resort, after all other peaceful means have been exhausted, limiting their time-frame and lessening their impact on civilian populations and neighbouring countries.

Mr. Benítez Sáenz (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/54/1) on the work of the Organization.

Like many other delegations whose representatives have already spoken on this item, we wish to highlight the special significance we attach to the Secretary-General's statement on 20 September to the General Assembly, which we see as being closely linked to the work of the Organization and its future.

We wish to refer to the question of armed intervention for humanitarian purposes outside the limits in the Charter and its impact on the sovereignty of States. However it is regarded, this is the burning issue currently before the Organization. On its correct resolution, respectful of international law, depends our future.

With good reason, the Secretary-General presented us in his statement with a series of questions promoting the Organization's restoration to its rightful place in international relations. The task before us is the responsibility of all Member States. Whether it is dealt with through analysis in existing working groups or in a new working group to be established, the matter should be discussed with transparency and universality, respecting the existing provisions of the Charter.

In much of his report the Secretary-General also raises many points regarding the lessons learned from the Kosovo conflict, which we believe are closely related to the problem. We fully share his assessment that the international community has no other universally accepted legal basis for responding to unjustifiable acts of violence but this Organization, the United Nations. It is within this Organization that we must overcome political limitations to be able to take action within the framework of the Charter. It is essential for regional security organizations to have the proper mandate from the Security Council.

While my delegation believes that the political message given to us by the Secretary-General is what deserves our greatest attention, we would like very briefly to highlight and comment specifically on a few points contained in the report. First, we see that no practical, equitable and reasonable solution has yet been found to respond to the concerns of third States affected by sanctions imposed by the Security Council. The principle of the responsibility of whoever adopts a measure has not yet been properly expressed, and there are States that are unjustly harmed, and they must be compensated.

In the area of peacekeeping operations, the Organization has been making important achievements with a new multidimensional operational approach. Here it is necessary to recall once again that the arrears of some Member States, which add up to more than $900 million, endangers the effectiveness of the system.

Finally, we encourage the further development of electoral assistance programmes, since we believe that such cooperation by the international community leads to the establishment and consolidation of national democracies.

Mr. Ibrahim (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his annual report on the work of the Organization. We pay tribute to him for his constant efforts to strengthen the Organization in all areas.

In contrast to the usual descriptive reports, this report the Secretary-General has taken a very progressive approach. He has voiced views and set forth valuable positions to be carefully studied. The full participation of delegations in considering the report bears witness to the importance of the issues raised by the Secretary-General and the validity of his perceptive insights, despite the differing views regarding them.

By studying the report of the Secretary-General, we can see that he has described the successes, as well as the failures, of the Organization in the maintenance of international peace and security, cooperation for development and in the humanitarian and other areas. This strengthens our belief that the United Nations can continue to play a significant role in promoting the well-being and security of the human race, in enhancing stability and in furtherance of its purposes and principles as enshrined in the Charter.

Since all peoples and nations of the world believe in the efficient role of the United Nations and attach great importance to the continuation of this role, we must take necessary positive steps to reform the Organization. I would like to quote my country's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Abdul-Qader Ba-Jammal, who addressed the General Assembly on 30 September:

> "Since one of our primary goals is the reform of the United Nations and, in particular, the Security Council and the international institutions, we are giving this goal our full attention and support. At the same time, we commend the Secretary-General for the initiatives and measures he has taken towards the goal of reforming the United Nations, its mechanisms and its methods of work, which would broaden democratic practices and achieve transparency of work and effectiveness of participation". *(A/54/PV.19)*

The Secretary-General also spoke about humanitarian intervention, which has been very controversial. Some have supported this concept; others have opposed it. In this connection, the Republic of Yemen firmly believes that it is important to protect human rights. We are committed to democratic practices in order to ensure integrated development, and we welcome the interest shown by the United Nations and the international community in the area of human rights. We must put an end to flagrant violations of human rights and to crimes against humanity that are perpetrated throughout the world. The international community cannot just sit back and watch violations of human rights and genocide without doing anything — whether genocide is committed on the basis of religion or of ethnic background. However, we believe that the decision to intervene on humanitarian grounds should be taken only after all peaceful methods have been exhausted. Preventive diplomacy can be very important here. In any event, intervention should be carried out in accordance with the United Nations Charter and on the basis of partnership, transparency and democracy. It should not be selective or based on a policy of double standards, a policy that the Secretary-General has warned against.

The principle of State sovereignty is a well-established principle in international relations. We cannot accept the notion that this principle is outmoded and has been superseded by international developments, so we support the Egyptian proposal to study this matter within the framework of the General Assembly.

As regards participation in globalization, it is natural that the poor and developing countries worry about globalization and trade liberalization. Most States whose economies are vulnerable cannot find their place in the new economic order. However, they cannot halt progress. So we have to define a new, objective policy and achieve international cooperation. The responsibility here is a collective one. The developing countries themselves must reform their own economic and financial systems. In contrast, the developed countries must provide assistance and support to the developing countries so they can achieve such reform. Globalization must have a human face. We cannot aspire to a better world if globalization means that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

Mr. Pohan (Indonesia): The Indonesian delegation has noted with interest the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/54/1), as well as his statement introducing the report. Taken together, they offer a comprehensive account of the functioning of our Organization and contain numerous proposals and approaches which warrant our careful and cautious consideration. We agree with the objective of strengthening the Organization in all fields, including the maintenance of international peace and security since, as the report highlights in paragraph 36, "there is no higher goal, no deeper commitment ... than preventing armed conflict."

The report also rightly focuses attention on economic and social issues which have long been sidelined. These have become all the more important today as conflicts are increasingly recognized to have socio-economic origins. As the Organization stands poised on the eve of a new millennium to assume the challenges of the future, its primary mission will be to convey to the world a renewed vision and to fulfil its commitment to development as the best means to root out the fundamental causes of conflicts which pose threats to international peace and security.

In this context, the report points out that decision-making is often paralysed by differences among the permanent members of the Security Council. It is paradoxical that while the Council is venturing into new areas which are within the purview of other United Nations organs and bodies, it is being squeezed out of its role in the maintenance of peace and security. Its role is being undermined when regional security organizations undertake enforcement actions without the Council's authorization. These are dangerous tendencies which could lead to future interventions without the consent of the States involved, and hence are unacceptable. The experience of the United Nations in peace enforcement or intervention has proved that either outcomes are uncertain or the course of action is dangerous. In situations where the decisions taken by the Security Council did not require the consent of the parties involved, they led to a loss of neutrality that exposed the United Nations to charges of violating national sovereignty. These situations were further aggravated by differences among the permanent members of the Council in dealing with conflicts when the parties involved were committed to a peaceful settlement. Intervention requires international consensus concerning policies, mandates and resources.

Intervention also has unacceptable implications for national sovereignty. These are rooted in the undemocratic and unrepresentative character of the Security Council, which does not inspire confidence in its impartiality and objectivity. Hence, we must remain vigilant against a growing trend to chip away at the sacrosanct principle of national sovereignty, one of the principles on which the United Nations itself was founded. It is the only defence against injustice in relations between strong and weak nations. To blame this principle for the inability of the Organization to come to the aid of suffering humanity anywhere is to distort the truth. To extend such assistance is a solemn obligation. Indeed, it is imperative. However, there are many reasons why the United Nations often finds itself ineffective in situations that require it to act swiftly and decisively. These include resource constraints, lack of political will, selectivity, misplaced media attention and dysfunction in the working of such bodies as the Security Council and in the implementing mechanisms. These have nothing to do with the principle of sovereignty. We must uphold this principle, for without it, the United Nations cannot stand, and small, weak nations will be cast down at the mercy of the big and the strong. Respect for sovereignty, which the United Nations system requires, is not an idle stipulation that can be rejected even for noble gestures, and an essential attribute of that sovereignty is the principle of consent, one of the cornerstones of the democratic ideal.

My delegation attaches particular importance to the issue of peacekeeping operations, which, as the report notes, faces major new challenges and complexities. It is to be noted that most peacekeeping operations are in developing countries and that many of the troop contributors are also from those nations. Peacekeeping forces must necessarily function on the basis of impartiality and the use of force in self-defence. If United Nations forces are seen as partisan, they will not enjoy the support of all parties to the conflict. Without such

support, they would be cast in the role of belligerents. This would also mean increased cost to the United Nations in terms of men and materials. Considering some recent successes and setbacks in peacekeeping operations, and taking into account the fact that such activities have moved beyond the traditional concept to a multidimensional one, there is an urgent need to review, to take stock of and to draw conclusions from recent experiences.

Indonesia agrees with the Secretary-General's view that "The systematic and progressive reduction of nuclear weapons, with the ultimate goal of their complete elimination, will remain one of the priority tasks of the international community." *(ibid., para. 119)*

In this regard, it is essential to reaffirm the issues of non-use of nuclear weapons, the prevention of nuclear war and the elimination of all nuclear weapons, and the priority of these issues in disarmament negotiations under multilateral auspices, which continue to be a preoccupation of the international community.

The report also touches upon the question of sanctions and calls for selective targeting in order to reduce the humanitarian costs to the civilian population. Many critical issues need to be clarified prior to the imposition of sanctions, especially their short-term and long-term effects on the country targeted and the collateral damage suffered by third parties. Sanctions should be terminated after their objectives are achieved. Such an approach would strengthen international support for the imposition and implementation of sanctions regimes.

With regard to the role of regional organizations in conflict situations, the Secretary-General has drawn our attention to the unique capabilities of the United Nations system in coordinating actions in multifaceted operations. In this context, we welcome close cooperation between the United Nations and various regional organizations, arrangements and agencies so that they can be mutually reinforcing and complementary. But it should also be recognized that they have their charters and specific mandates and competences. Hence, such cooperation should be carried out on the basis of coordination and consultation. This calls for a thorough exploration of possible procedures and mechanisms that would strengthen interaction between them.

While acknowledging that post-conflict peace-building is a new and evolving concept, my delegation acknowledges the usefulness of the holistic approach encompassing diverse activities. It is appropriate that such activities be undertaken on the basis of agreements ending conflicts or reached after conflicts have ended.

International peace and security are indispensable for the economic well-being of all peoples. Stability will be possible only if the international community addresses the underlying socio-economic causes of instability. In this context, the United Nations can and should play a central role in overcoming the economic problems caused especially by the forces of globalization and liberalization. In recognition of the indivisibility of peace and prosperity, the revitalization of a global developmental strategy and the eradication of poverty should be priority goals for the United Nations. This could be brought about by a greater commitment to multilateral development cooperation. Most important of all, there can be real peace and development only if there are substantive changes and reforms of the global economic and financial systems so that the developing countries can have a fair chance of achieving social and economic development for their peoples.

Let me conclude by drawing attention to various proposals, including those advanced by Egypt and Mexico, for a follow-up of the ideas and approaches introduced by the Secretary-General, both in his report and in his statement of 20 September to the General Assembly. These proposals warrant our serious study and scrutiny, with a view to a role for the General Assembly in accordance with the Charter.

Mr. Akinsanya (Nigeria): Although the head of the Nigerian delegation to the General Assembly at its current session, His Excellency President Olusegun Obasanjo, has had the opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, I cannot pass up this unique opportunity to restate my personal delight at seeing you, a son of Africa, in the Chair. As one who has had the privilege of seeing you at work, in both bilateral and multilateral forums since 1981 — when I first met you in Geneva, during the United Nations conference on Namibia — I am confident that your rich experience and statesmanship will see us through a very successful session.

The Nigerian delegation would like to express deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his excellent report on the work of our Organization (A/54/1). Like the delegations that have spoken before me, we found the report very comprehensive, as it touches on all the issues of concern to the international community.

On the eve of a new millennium, Member States of the United Nations have to cooperate in all areas of human endeavour to usher in a new world order devoid of ignorance, poverty, war and disease. The international community has to rededicate itself to the eradication of these vices, using every available means. In this context, we should serve notice of our rejection of breaches of the right of the individual wherever they might occur. We believe that the object of Governments must remain the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of individual citizens, and not trampling on them. My delegation believes that the international community must resolve to match its words with deeds, as this is the only way that the impact of our Organization can be felt by ordinary people.

In this context, the concept of humanitarian intervention clearly requires careful study. While we uphold the concept of sovereignty, we have to recognize that States can no longer shield violations of the rights of their citizens under the cloak of sovereignty. It would appear that some consensus is emerging on the need for international action in cases involving gross violations of human and peoples' rights. It is our belief, however, that in all cases intervention has to be carried out under a clearly defined and acceptable framework.

It is now a fact that national frontiers are becoming blurred. No nation can afford to remain untouched by developments outside its borders. In no area has this been more clearly demonstrated than in the sphere of globalization. The consequences of globalization can therefore be most effectively tackled only in the context of concerted international action by individuals, organizations and Governments. We therefore endorse and welcome the Secretary-General's views in this regard. The plan of action drawn up by the United Nations Development Group covering four broad areas of activities, as enumerated in the Secretary-General's report, can be realized only if States and organizations cooperate with each other and work in unison to mitigate the negative effects of globalization, which, my delegation also believes, should wear a human face.

As we take measures to address the problems of economic development and poverty eradication in our various countries, my delegation believes that our efforts in this regard require a favourable international environment for them to succeed. The questions of external debt, net capital flows — in terms of foreign direct investment and official development assistance — and market access for products from developing countries remain crucial, particularly in this era of globalization.

The Nigerian delegation welcomes, and in fact shares, the Secretary-General's concerns about preventive diplomacy and peacemaking as genuine tools for achieving lasting international peace and security. It is the view of my delegation that Member States have to demonstrate strong political will as well as greater commitment to providing adequate financial and material resources if the objectives of preventive diplomacy are to be realized. Ultimately, preventive diplomacy is more cost-effective, both in terms of saving lives and scarce material resources, than action taken after the eruption of conflicts. From our experience in our subregion within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), we are beginning to explore ways and means of strengthening preventive diplomacy, as was recently demonstrated by the manner in which we swiftly moved to address certain difficulties in relations between some member States of our subregional organization.

It is the desire of all peace-loving people to see a world devoid of war and strife. We have no option but to continue to intensify our actions in this important area of conflict prevention, peacemaking and peace-building. In addition, post-conflict peace-building and rehabilitation measures must be intensified for the achievement of enduring peace. In this regard, the plight of refugees and displaced persons, especially in Africa, has to be urgently addressed.

While we in Africa are conscious of the imperative need to take measures on our own to address the crises facing our continent — and we have in fact been doing so — our efforts can yield the desired results only if they are supported and complemented by the international community. But, unfortunately, these complementary efforts have not always been forthcoming, and even when they are, the quantum of support falls short of expectations in view of international responses to similar situations in other parts of the world. This attitude must change, in the true spirit of partnership and a globalizing world.

The Nigerian delegation endorses the Secretary-General's comments on disarmament and international security and wishes to reaffirm its commitment to global efforts at nuclear disarmament and, particularly, at ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the anti-personnel landmines Convention. We also share

the Secretary-General's views on how the proliferation of small arms has contributed to the escalation of conflicts in developing countries, particularly in Africa. We therefore join other delegations in calling for controls on the movement of these deadly weapons of war that have continued to kill and maim our citizens.

On the issue of United Nations reform, the Nigerian delegation is of the view that it should no longer be delayed. The structures and working processes of our Organization have to be democratized. The United Nations cannot afford to be an umpire urging democratic reforms in Member States while its own structures are devoid of democratic values. Africa has to be given adequate representation, especially among the permanent membership of the Security Council. In this regard, we would like to echo the call made by our President, Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, when he addressed this body on 23 September 1999 and urged the General Assembly to conclude deliberations during its current session on the modalities for the reform and expansion of the Security Council, for adoption by the Millennium Assembly next year.

It is the view of my delegation that the reform being advocated is not meant to weaken the United Nations but to strengthen the Charter in order to enable the Organization to meet the challenges posed by new realities. These reforms have to be effected if our Organization is to meet the challenges of the next millennium.

Touching on another issue, the Nigerian Government has always supported and will continue to support any effort that would improve the financial position of the United Nations. The United Nations rightly deserves to have a strong financial base in order for the Organization to carry out its wide-ranging obligations. It is therefore imperative for Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time.

Mr. Belfort (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Haiti was pleased to read the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, which clearly shows a concern to prepare the Organization to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century successfully.

As the report underscores, the main challenge facing the international community will be of a humanitarian nature, not only at the level of international security but also with respect to measures aimed at eliminating poverty and the negative effects of globalization on the environment or on the social and economic structure of small States or developing countries. Meeting such a challenge will be a major undertaking for the Organization, especially given the fact that, in the view of many of the representatives who have spoken in this forum, humanitarian assistance and international human rights policies are often inconsistent with the principle of the sovereignty of States, which is the cornerstone of the current system of international relations.

It is an important question, because it gives rise to legitimate concerns. However, in no way should it be seen, from the perspective of a misconceived post-modernism, as a pretext for pitting the concept of sovereignty against that of human rights. There can be no ambiguity in this respect. The universal character of human rights and their corollary, the humanitarian challenge, must be retained and strengthened in strict accordance with the Charter governing our Organization, in order to eliminate any ambiguities relating to the concept of humanitarian intervention.

My delegation took careful note of the comment made by the Secretary-General in his report that elections are a necessary, but not sufficient condition for creating viable and lasting democracies. But establishing or strengthening administrative infrastructures is not enough either to contribute decisively to the promotion of sustainable new democracies. It is therefore imperative to take into account basic economic parameters.

In this context, we take this opportunity to welcome once again the initiative taken by Ambassador Paolo Fulci for the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council. The role and the importance of this United Nations organ have been underplayed for far too long. On the eve of the third millennium, it is up to all Members of the Organization to contribute to enabling that body once again to assume its full role in order to assist the Secretary-General in building and promoting a culture of prevention, with a view to meeting successfully the humanitarian challenges of the twenty-first century.

My delegation has also noted that in his report the Secretary-General underscores the fact that the challenges of development and poverty eradication can be met only through well-planned, coordinated and adequately funded international action. Since the United Nations is uniquely and favourably positioned to carry out this task, it is important to effect the necessary reform of the Organization as soon as possible, be it in the context of equitable representation on the Security Council or of strengthening the administrative efficiency of the

Organization, while avoiding any unnecessary expense and taking the measures needed to prevent any overlap of the activities of various United Nations bodies.

In order to meet the political, social and economic challenges of the twenty-first century, it is important to strengthen the role of the United Nations, which offers a multilateral global framework for identifying problems and jointly resolving them.

The next session of the General Assembly will be the Millennium Assembly, and a key question for this body is deciding on its focus. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in his statement of 20 September, implied that the focus could be on the concept of the humanitarian challenge. That concept has the advantage of encompassing all of the varied elements of concern, including preventive diplomacy, post-conflict peace-building, poverty eradication and the negative effects of globalization.

As the Secretary-General clearly pointed out in his report, to meet the humanitarian challenge successfully and help prevent man-made disasters, we must first understand the underlying causes and then devise appropriate prevention strategies.

But before we can arrive at the hoped-for results, we must first and foremost, at this session, give in-depth consideration to key questions such as the implementation of the resolutions of the Organization, the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the reform of the United Nations system. This will enable us to arrive at the necessary conceptual and operational consensus for this Organization to meet the fundamental challenge of the twenty-first century — the humanitarian challenge.

Mr. Moushoutas (Cyprus): My delegation would like to join previous speakers who have congratulated the Secretary-General on his lucid and thought-provoking report, which is now before us. We have no doubt that the Secretary-General's recommendations, if implemented faithfully, will contribute greatly towards achieving the goals for which the United Nations was created.

This is a crucial phase for our Organization in terms of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The absoluteness of its authority as regards the legitimate use of force is being tested, even doubted. We do not share these doubts. The Charter, which has been signed by 188 Member States, bestows on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security, except in situations of self-defence, as set out in Article 51. Only the Council may employ coercive measures, including the use of armed force. There can be no substitute for the Charter, nor can it be superseded, for there is no other legal international instrument which enjoys the unanimous support of the membership of the United Nations.

Despite its five decades of existence, the Charter is still not merely relevant but indispensable, and its provisions and its purposes need no change. What is needed, we hold, is the faithful implementation of all its provisions, including those in Article 43 on the establishment of a permanent international security system, which have remained unimplemented since the inception of the Charter. The Charter remains the sole and exclusive legal source for the legitimate use of armed force when dealing with breaches of peace and security.

What about situations, we are asked, of brutal disregard of humanitarian norms within a State? Is the principle of non-interference applicable? Does respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States prevail? We believe that in such situations the international community cannot remain apathetic, especially in cases where gross and systematic violations of human rights, involving thousands of people, are perpetrated. Involvement, however, must be based on the Charter and on the legality of a United Nations mandate. If we accept interventions outside the United Nations, we may be opening a Pandora's box, for there will always be those leaders who will cover their sinister designs for expansion through aggression with a pretext of humanitarianism and the protection of minorities and ethnic groups. Article 2, paragraph 4, prohibits such use of force.

What is to be done, however, when the Security Council finds itself unable to undertake military action? First of all, the Charter provides for a number of coercive measures not involving the use of armed force, which the Council may adopt. If these measures, provided for in Article 41 of the Charter, prove inadequate, the issue may be brought before the General Assembly for consideration.

In his report, the Secretary-General identifies numerous causes for the probability of wars, such as poverty and inequality, economic decline, control of economic resources, and dehumanizing ideologies propagated by hate-media. We agree with previous speakers that militant separatist movements can also be causes of conflicts and can pose grave dangers to the

sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. Militant separatism, besides being anachronistic in a globalized and interdependent world, attacks the very substance of peaceful, integrated coexistence. It emphasizes what divides and segregates rather than what unites and integrates. Hence, we find agenda item 34, "Dialogue among civilizations", useful for bridging these differences.

We agree that the prevention of conflicts saves both human lives and valuable resources. We must ensure, however, that preventive diplomacy is conducted in accordance with the Charter. Perhaps primary attention should be given to the long-unresolved problems which need to be addressed with justice and fairness and in accordance with United Nations principles and resolutions before they become even greater crises.

We agree that cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations should be further strengthened, so long as this does not lead to disregard for the indispensability of the United Nations in the commencement and carrying out of peacekeeping operations.

Finally, we support discussion of the issue of humanitarian intervention to clarify terms such as "humanitarian crisis", and to agree on criteria and a legal framework for any enforcement action on the basis of the United Nations Charter. The initiative of Egypt, to discuss the international response to humanitarian crises within the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on An Agenda for Peace, meets with our full support.

Mr. Jordán-Pando (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish, Sir, to renew my delegation's congratulations on the recognition the General Assembly has offered you in electing you its President. I wish also to congratulate the Secretary-General and to thank him for his report on the work of the Organization, contained in document A/54/1. As always, it is complete, informative, comprehensive and very thought-provoking. The report makes us think about ways to deal with issues of concern to the United Nations system.

At the 32nd plenary meeting, held last Friday, the Permanent Representative of Spain, Ambassador Inocencio F. Arias, drew on the report of the Secretary-General to discuss the clash between the universally recognized principle of respect for sovereignty, which is essential and vital for international law, and the so-called principle — not universally recognized — of humanitarian intervention, which thus far lacks a context, international recognition, and a formal legal framework. Ambassador Arias noted those deficiencies and related them to the ambit of the United Nations.

That representative ably raised a number of questions that certainly gave us all food for thought: First, is it only the Security Council that under international law has the right to intervene? Secondly, what happens when the Security Council finds itself paralyzed? Thirdly, should the international community in the twenty-first century remain passive when a permanent member of the Security Council uses its veto? Fourthly, can collective outrage be stifled by respect for the principle of sovereignty or by the obstruction of a single country? And fifthly, which will prevail: absolute and unfailing respect for sovereignty, the will of a Power or group of Powers, or the outcry of society once it has decided not to remain inactive?

Those issues raised by Ambassador Arias relate to peace and security — and to the Security Council, a matter the General Assembly has been discussing for more than six years in an attempt to bring the legal framework of 1945 into the twenty-first century. Indeed, this has been one of the crucial United Nations issues for the past 54 years. These are philosophical and legal issues relating to international law, and it would take a great deal of time to consider them and to reach agreement on them. They will be fuel for intellectual exercises, for diplomacy, and for our discussions here in the General Assembly.

We have not yet been able fully to assess the cost the Organization and to the international community had to pay and are continuing to pay because, for example, of the inability to enable so-called international legality to operate in the case of Kosovo.

Obviously, it would be logical for the current problems of our Organization and the United Nations system to be the subjects of the Millennium Assembly and the Millennium Summit, which is to be called "The United Nations in the twenty-first century." In this way we would not simply hand over this century's problems to the next century. We could at least change the terms of the debate a little, offering new beginnings for possible solutions. It is felt, however, that we should take up issues of great importance, such as the eradication of poverty. But these, issues can be left to specific regional and international interactional forums, with the participation of Governments, national and international specialists, agencies of the United Nations system, our

regional economic commissions, international organizations and so forth. To do otherwise would be to distract ourselves, with the result that, for reasons of time and resources, we could not take up issues critical to our Organization.

There are other crises which are, like the ones I have mentioned, among the issues raised by the Secretary-General. I am thinking of the financing of development and cooperation for development, which support the development structure of the developing or, to be blunt, the underdeveloped — and the 0.7 per cent of gross national product that is supposed to come from all the developed countries, but, with the exception mainly of the Nordic countries, does not.

If this is directly related to the costs of peacekeeping — and there is a direct relation — then one can conclude that we are just creating another vicious circle, as in the case of the Security Council with regard to financing development and financing peacekeeping. There is a desire to put a percentage ceiling on military peacekeeping costs, but nobody thinks about also approving sufficient funds, as advocated in the Charter, for development. On the contrary, resources for development and cooperation for development are constantly being drastically reduced because of peacekeeping costs; they are being totally consumed by those costs. The donor countries are reducing their contributions for development on the ground that they have to increase their peacekeeping contributions. In fact, the United Nations should maintain sufficient financing for the development of Member States. On the other hand, Member States must cover the cost of peacekeeping, for all States have a duty in the maintenance of peace. We already have our figures assigned and agreed multilaterally, not through negotiations.

On this point, my delegation takes this opportunity to say, as it has in the Second Committee and Fifth Committee, that there should be differential treatment with respect to such costs. Obviously, for example, countries involved in conflict without going through the Security Council or complying with international legality should pay more than those which respect the Charter of the United Nations. There is a difference between financing destruction and financing useful construction. I am referring only to costs within the United Nations system.

Finally, my delegation thinks that the eradication of poverty should be taken up in a special world forum, just as the information revolution — based on electronics, informatics and telecommunications — should be considered in other regional and world forums so as to universalize education in science, technology and information technology. In this way, knowledge would become more universal. This has to be a matter of constant concern to the United Nations, for countries that are not involved in the information revolution will not be able to enter the twenty-first century. They will marginalize, and so will universities and educational institutions at all levels if they are not part of these universal networks. I am even bold enough to think and say — and I have proposed this to the Chairman of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Paolo Fulci of Italy — that the work of the Economic and Social Council should be extended, so that it would become the Economic, Social, Science and Technology Committee.

Those are my delegation's contributions and suggestions in connection with the Secretary-General's report.

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report (A/54/1) of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 10.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.